

Message Text

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SUBJ: INDIAN ASSOCIATION QUESTIONS ARENS' REPORT ON PARAGUAYAN
INDIANS

REF: A) A-13 DATED 2/21/78; B) ASUNCION 527

1. THE ASOCIACION DE PARCIALIDADES INDIGENAS (API) AND ITS TECHNICAL TEAM HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE FEBRUARY 21 TO RELEASE A STATEMENT REFUTING SOME OF THE FINDINGS IN PROFESSOR RICHARD ARENS' RECENTLY RELEASED REPORT: "THE FOREST INDIANS IN STROESSNER'S PARAGUAY: SURVIVAL OR EXTINCTION." THE API IS SPONSORED BY THE INTER-AMERICAN FOUNDATION THROUGH PROJECT MARANDU II, AND ITS TECHNICAL TEAM IS LED BY ANTHROPOLOGIST MIGUEL CHASE-SARDI.

2. THE RELEASED STATEMENT NOTES THAT THERE ARE UNDOUBTEDLY DIFFICULT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS FACING THE PARAGUAYAN INDIAN. IT ALSO NOTES THAT PROFESSOR ARENS HAD PUBLISHED HIS 1976 BOOK, "GENOCIDE IN PARAGUAY", ON THE BASIS OF OTHER PEOPLES' INFORMATION AND WITHOUT PERSONALLY OBSERVING THE CONDITIONS OF THE PARAGUAYAN INDIAN. AS A RESULT, API HAD WELCOMED ARENS' AUGUST 1977 VISIT TO PARAGUAY BUT WAS ASTONISHED AT SOME OF HIS FINDINGS.

3. TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT, API PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING LIST OF COMMENTS TO CORRECT WHAT IT CONSIDERS ERRONEOUS INTERPRETATIONS
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IN ARENS' REPORT.
(A) MASSIVE DEFORESTATION DOES NOT EXIST IN THE COLONIA NACIONAL GUAYAKI (A RESERVATION FOR ACHE INDIANS).
(B) THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH THE ACHE LIVE IN THIS RESERVATION DO NOT CORRESPOND TO THOSE FOUND IN ADVANCED WESTERN SOCIETIES. THE HUTS OF THE INDIANS SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED ANY MORE SHOCKING THAN THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH MANY LATIN

AMERICAN PEASANTS LIVE ALONG WITH THE INHABITANTS OF SLUMS IN MANY LATIN AMERICAN CITIES.

(C) THE ABSENCE OF YOUNG ADULT MALES FROM THE RESERVATION AT THE TIME ARENS VISITED WAS BECAUSE THEY WERE HUNTING.

(D) THE EPIDEMICS OF INFECTIONS RESPIRATORY DISEASES ARE VERY FREQUENT AMONG THE INDIANS BECAUSE OF AN HEREDITARY ABSENCE OF DEFENSE MECHANISMS.

(E) THE CASE OF THE NON-TREATMENT OF AN ACHE BOY WITH A MALIGNANCY WAS SOLELY BECAUSE OF THE LOW TECHNICAL LEVEL OF THE NEW TRIBES MISSIONARY IN MEDICAL MATTERS.

(F) THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE INDIANS LIVING IN PUERTO CASADO AND NEAR THE MENNONITE CENTERS ARE CAUSED BY THE SAME CONDITIONS PREVALENT IN CITY SLUMS AROQOD LATIN AMERICA.

(G) THE INDIAN OF FARSMORO, AN UNTREATED TERMINAL TUBERCULAR CASE, IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF AMERICAN PROTESTANT MISSIONARIES. AT THE PRESENT TIME, HUNDREDS OF INDIANS WITH TUBERCULOSIS ARE BEING TREATED IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FACILITIES.

(H) THE API IS NOT A GOVERNMENT ENTITY.

(I) ARENS VISITED AREAS REPRESENTATIVE OF NORMAL INDIAN CONDITIONS, AS HE WISHED. THERE ARE NO AREAS CLOSED TO VISITORS, AS ARENS IMPLIES. ONLY THE SHORT TIME AVAILABLE TO HIM KEPT HIM FROM VISITING OTHER AREAS.

(J) THE API CONSIDRS ARENS' CONCLUSIONS EMOTIONALLY-CHARGED, PERHAPS STEMMING FROM DISCOURTEOUS TREATMENT HE RECEIVED FROM SOMEONE DURING HIS STAY. THESE CONCLUSIONS CONTRADICT WHAT HE HAD SAID IN MEETINGS WITH INDIAN LEADERS.

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(K) THERE IS NOT NO OFFICIAL ATTEMPT TO KEEP THE ACHE IN THE NATIONAL RESERVATION OR AT ANY OTHER PLACE IN CAPTIVITY.

(L) THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE AGAINST THE INDIANS NOR DOES IT SUPPORT ANY PROGRAM TO EXTERMINATE INDIANS. ON THE CONTRARY, IT IS ACTIVELY COLLABORATING IN EFFORTS TO RELIEVE LONG-STANDING PROBLEMS. ABUSES AND CRIMES AGAINST INDIANS BY INDIVIDUALS WILL BE FOUGHT BY RECOURSE TO THE LEGAL SYSTEM.

(M) THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF PARAGUAYAN INDIANS AND THEIR LOSS OF ETHNIC IDENTITY ARE THE SAME AS PROBLEMS FOUND THROUGHOUT AMERICA, AFRICA, ASIA, AND OCEANIA. TO FIND SOLUTIONS TO THESE, RATHER THAN SENSATIONALIST AND DESTRUCTIVE CRITICISM, IT IS NECESSARY TO WORK PATIENTLY WITH AND FOR THE INDIANS AND TO GAIN SUPPORT FOR THEIR CAUSE.

4. COMMENT: CHASE-SARDI AND THE API RELEASED THE STATEMENT AT THE REQUEST OF THE GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, THEIR SPECIFIC COMMENTS ARE IN ACCORD WITH THE ACTUAL SITUATION AN IT APPEARS THEY DID NOT HAVE TO GO BEYOND WHAT THEY, IN FACT, FELT WERE DISTORTIONS IN ARENS' REPORT. THE STATEMENT WAS GIVEN PROMINENT PLAY IN THE LOCAL PRESS.

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